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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRAGUE 001134

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TAGS: PREL PGOV UN FUN SR LE IS KPAL EZ

SUBJECT: CZECHS ON SEPTEMBER 15 GAERC

REF: A. STATE 151189

1B. STATE 150777

1C. PRAGUE 1124

Classified By: Political-Economic Counselor Mike Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. At the September 15 GAERC, the Czechs expect the focus to be on the Middle East (Iran, Israel, Lebanon, and Iraq), the Balkans, and Africa. The Czechs support sanctions for Iran, although they hope for international consensus. On Palestine, the Czechs will urge the EU to issue GAERC conclusions that link recognition of the new Unity government to the quartet principles. On Lebanon, the EU is considering providing assistance (separate from UNIFIL) to help secure the Syrian Border. Although Balek suspects the Czechs will not contribute troops to UNIFIL in the short-term, they may contribute to the EU initiative. On Iraq, the Czechs will continue to stress the importance of EU participation. The Czech position remains unchanged on the Balkans. The Czechs will not be active on Africa issues, and plan to close their Embassy in Kinshasa. Finally, Balek confirmed that new FM Sasha Vondra will not/not be attending the GAERC meeting. End summary.

12. (SBU) Poloff met September 14 with the Director of the Czech MFA's CFSP Department Vaclav Balek to discuss the September 15 GAERC and deliver ref A and B talking points.

Middle East

13. (C/NF) Balek said the EU ministers agreed at the Gymnich that they would focus on Iran at this GAERC meeting. (Balek noted it was helpful that EU members were finally able to review the text of Iran's response.) The Czechs support sanctions for Iran, but hope for international consensus. Short of that, the Czechs would probably support sanctions imposed by like-minded countries, such as the U.S. and individual EU member states. Balek said Spain and Italy oppose sanctions because they would interfere with trade relations with Iran. Therefore, he predicted the EU will not be able to muster a strong statement on Iran in the GAERC conclusions.

14. (C/NF) On Palestine, the Czechs are not happy with the draft conclusions because they do not link EU recognition of the new Unity government to the quartet principles. They will urge EU partners to adopt language calling on the new government to recognize Israel, denounce violence, and honor

previous commitments. However, the Czechs are not optimistic. According to Balek, the UK is pushing the softer language (in Balek's personal opinion, British PM Tony Blair wants to be seen as having a success in the Middle East).

¶5. (C) On Lebanon, Balek said the EU is considering providing help to secure the Syrian border. A fact-finding mission may be sent to assess the feasibility of deploying a separate EU mission (perhaps 100-200 border patrols or police) to provide real assistance for border control and as a "confidence building measure." This mission would be separate from the EU contribution to UNIFIL. Balek predicted that the Czechs will not/not contribute troops to UNIFIL in the short-term (Ref C), but may contribute to the EU initiative.

¶6. (C) On Iraq, the Czechs will continue to stress the importance of EU participation.

The Balkans

¶7. (C) Balek said the Czech position remains unchanged on the Balkans, and they do not expect controversy at GAERC. On Serbian ICTY compliance, he described the Czechs as "willing to be a little flexible." They would rather focus on what Serbia is doing in real terms, rather than just whether they turn over Mladic to the Hague. In his view, the U.S. and NATO also seem to be focusing on Serbia's practical cooperation.

Africa

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¶8. (C) The Czechs do not plan to be active on Africa issues. Balek also noted that according to press reports, the Czechs plan to close their Embassy in Kinshasa.

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